

27.
SALVATION BY GRACE;

OR

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN THE IMPUTED
RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST ALONE.

A SERMON,

DELIVERED AT

HANOVER CHURCH, PRINCE EDWARD,

VIRGINIA,

January 15th, 1837,

BY

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DESIGNED AS

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TO THE MINISTERS AND CHURCHES IN THE STATE OF
VIRGINIA, the following Discourse is respectfully and affec-
tionately inscribed, by their friend and fellow-servant in the
Lord.

THE AUTHOR.

Prince Edward, January 23, 1837.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

Ephesians ii. 8, 9. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

It may be thought by some who are now addressed, that the passage just read inculcates as true doctrine of Christianity, exceedingly simple, well known and well understood, and which therefore presents a theme for discussion which, at present, is neither very pertinent nor opportune. The doctrine which it inculcates, in connection with the context, is obviously *the doctrine of salvation*, or which is the same thing, *of justification by faith in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone*. It is indeed a simple doctrine if, disentangled from metaphysical speculations, and the conceits of a vain philosophy, we take the declarations of inspiration concerning it, in their plain and obvious signification, for our guide: but simple as it is, if we suppose it to be well known, and cordially embraced by the great mass of even professing christians, we shall be egregiously mistaken. There are *Masters in Israel* whose views on this topic are indistinct and erroneous: and there is the same necessity now that there was formerly, that professing christians be *instructed in what are the first principles of the doctrines of Christ*, and *be fed with milk* instead of *meat*. The doctrine of justification by faith in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone, is disputed, is denied, is opposed, is diluted. This is done within the pale of our own communion, in the Presbyterian church, by Presbyterian presses, and in Presbyterian pulpits; and somewhat extensively too. Nor do we speak rashly and unadvisedly when we say so; but "we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." We can prove the things whereof we affirm.

This, however, cannot be done without *controversy*; a word which, from the crude associations of the age, has become identified in the minds of some with all that is odious in the horrors of the Inquisition. Ought I to be *pained* at the thought of embarking in controversy? That the *necessity* for controversy should *exist*, may well excite pain in the

preacher: but when the necessity for entering into controversy for the defence of truth is imposed upon him, he ought not to be pained that it is devolved upon him to stand up for God.

There are a multitude of idle and hurtful fancies afloat in the minds of many respecting *religious controversy*. They seem to think that in no case is it necessary, and that it must always proceed from an improper spirit. The clashing of opinions on politics and other subjects is quite common, and for the most part, is considered as a very venial occurrence; but on the subject of *religion* it is imagined that what one believes is a matter of such slight importance, that the opinions of men are to be approached with peculiar deference and caution. It is deemed the height of rudeness and incivility, a violation of the rules of good-breeding and christian charity, to dissent from them: and therefore, as the phrase goes, the parties must "agree to differ;" agree to differ, when those cardinal and vital principles are at stake, which the Son of God, and his holy Prophets and Apostles, have taught and sealed with their blood, and which affect most deeply the eternal "weal and woe" of sinful men.

Those who call themselves christians ought to be ashamed of such a latitudinarian and pusillanimous surrender of their principles. There is not a single sentence for the countenance and encouragement of this specious liberality in the whole word of God. If there is, let it be produced. We want to see it. If there is, reconcile it with the following passages: "Buy the truth, and sell it not. Hold fast the form of sound words. If any come to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds."

I am sick to the very heart's core of the cant that is now current in the churches about religious controversy; as though the existing differences were of no moment, or merely imaginary, and we had at length found out some new way of propagating and perpetuating gospel truth without coming in disagreeable contact with the opinions and views of others. This, we believe, will be done, (and not before,) when 'the offence of the cross has ceased'; when the 'carnal mind is' no longer 'enmity against God'; and when 'the natural man,' no longer esteeming them *foolishness*, shall 'receive the things of the Spirit of God.'

Till this revolution shall be brought about, we augur that things will go on substantially as they have been going from the beginning;

Cain wrothful and wreaking his vengeance on Abel, *because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*; Jacob and Esau, Isaac and Ishmael at variance; the seed of the serpent at war with the children of promise; Ephraim envying Judah, and Judah vexing Ephraim; the spirit of truth in conflict with the spirit of error; in a word, all that is holy combined against all that is sinful; a warfare, we believe, which will be kept up on both sides by an aversion which is mutual and instinctive, which in its character is inveterate and uncompromising, and in its tendencies utterly irreconcilable and exterminating. The final struggle will be in the field of Armageddon; and the contest will terminate when the mustered forces shall have tried their strength in the battle of that great day of God Almighty; unless indeed the encounter which the assembled forces of Gog and Magog shall make on the *camp of the saints*, when they *compass the beloved city*, and *fire shall come down from God out of heaven and devour them*, shall be of subsequent occurrence.

It is by the collision of minds that truth is ordinarily elicited; and with regard to the controversies that are now agitated in the church, and which call forth from many such lugubrious strains, my chief surprise is, that the advocates of truth, or what is sneeringly called *orthodoxy*, should have conducted their cause with so little intemperance, while those opposed to them have controverted *their* opinions without the smallest ceremony; and in the same breath too in which they were proclaiming their neutrality, or clamorously calling for an armistice, or vehemently exhorting to the exercise of *brotherly love*.

As yet we have not heard of a drop of blood that has been shed in this controversy. In this respect it happily differs from most controversies of former ages. We hope, if it is to be continued, that, as hitherto, it will be unstained by violence; but as long as the occasion shall demand it, we hope too that the onset on error, by *weapons that are not carnal*, by argument and *the Sword of the Spirit*, by reproof and persuasion, will wax warmer and warmer, till truth is triumphant, and error lies bleeding and lifeless.

The doctrine, as already stated, of justification by faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, is the doctrine of the text. It is the doctrine which constitutes the life and soul that pervade the whole system of Divine Revelation. It is the key-stone in the grand Arch of Christian doctrines, which gives symmetry, solidity, and beauty to the whole. Impair or remove it, and the entire fabric is

weakened and defaced, or tumbles into ruins. Hence the virulence with which its enemies have assailed, and the resolution and steadfastness with which its friends have defended it. Luther denominates it, *Articulus stantis aut cadentis Ecclesie*:—the Index of a true or false church, whose character is decided by its adoption or rejection. In this view of the subject the whole company of the Reformers coincided. The great Apostle of the Gentiles dwells on it with peculiar emphasis throughout his inimitable writings, but especially in his Epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Ephesians. For those who denied, or in any way impugned it, he had no respect, no charity. He could not tolerate them, nor maintain any friendly communion with them. Whenever he discovered a declension of this sort in his most endeared friends and associates, it excited him to such a pitch that he gave no place by subjection to them, no, not for an hour. He showed them no quarter. Even Peter, in whom he perceived a leaning of this kind, he *withstood to the face*, and faithfully and fearlessly charged home upon him his duplicity. This is an exemplification of what he means when he says,—“from henceforth know we no man after the flesh.”

Another illustration of this same feeling, as well as a fuller exhibition of his views on the topic under consideration, is found in the following declarations: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you—? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: For it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.—Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised; Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified (or attempting to be justified) by the law: Ye are fallen from grace:—” He does not mean *entirely*; but that the downward career was commenced, which terminates in total and fatal apostacy.

The persons who are here reprov'd, were not devoid of attachment

to the gospel as a system of doctrines. They embraced it in the main; and only indulged their prepossessions, which were natural and strong, in favor of a few points in Jewish observances. But their views led (unconsciously no doubt,) to false and destructive conclusions; thus sapping the foundation, and in their tendencies resulting in the utter overthrow of the christian fabric.

If any thing, except the righteousness of Christ, can avail in the sinner's justification, it may as well be one thing as another; and *circumcision* may become the substitute as well as any thing else of either human, or angelic devising. He will be a complete Saviour or none at all.

“What is all righteousness that men devise?
 What, but a sordid bargain for the skies?
 And Christ as soon would abdicate his own,
 As stoop from heaven to sell the proud a throne.”

The justification for which we contend is an *exclusive* justification: a justification that shuts out *every thing else*. It is *absolute*. It allows nothing to come in as a *meritorious* or *procuring* cause as an aid to or an appendage of, or substitute for the righteousness of Christ, either in whole or in part.

The questions that have been started in relation to justification are various. Some hold to the opinion just expressed, that in the most absolute sense it is *wholly of God*. Others hold, on the opposite hand that it is altogether, or chiefly of *men*. While a third class, who would disdain to be ranked with the last mentioned, adopt, at least as their language implies, the belief, that, in a *limited* and *partial* sense, man is the author of his own salvation. With the latter class is our controversy at present.

It is due to them, however, to state, (for we have no desire to misrepresent them,) that for the most part they promptly and indignantly disclaim all intentions to detract from the perfection and glory of the Redeemer's righteousness. This, they say, is full, finished, infinite. We shall give them credit too for *sincerity*; while at the same time, (as the principles we avow do not bind us to a like complaisance with theirs,) we shall not scruple to charge them with *inconsistencies* and *contradictions*, which glare in their *language*, which is unsupported by reason and scripture, and which is suited to lead *others*, if it does not conduct *them*, into fatal and soul-destroying delusions.

"True," they will own to you, "salvation is altogether of grace, and *grace* the term which is employed in the gospel in reference to this subject, means *favor to the ill-deserving*. Men are universally and entirely depraved *in consequence* of Adam's sin. No one, therefore, is justified before God on account of his own righteousness. It is the sole province of Christ's righteousness to do this. But then it must be recollected that men have an intellectual nature, memory, understanding judgment, will, conscience, and affections. They are *moral agents*, accountable beings, who, as such are endued with the powers of *free agency*. These faculties, or appendages, or whatever else they may be called, are either not impaired, or destroyed by the apostacy; and, therefore, they have ability to perform some of the duties that are required of them; they have ability to repent, and believe, and love God."

Now in all this language, we say, there is gross *inconsistency*, and that it is suited to mislead. In opposition to it, we assume the old Calvinistic and Westminster, or, (what we conceive to be the same thing,) the *scriptural* stand. We embrace the opinion of those who affirm that in the most absolute sense salvation is *wholly of God*; and we deny that man, in his fallen estate, *has any ability whatever* to perform the duties just specified.

We object in the first place, to the term *ability* as it is employed in this controversy, if understood according to its legitimate and established signification. When we say that a person has *ability* for the execution of any particular purpose; we mean, or shall be so understood to mean, that he has all the *power* that is adequate to its accomplishment. And if we mean any thing different from this, it is incumbent on us to state distinctly the exact sense in which we employ the term. Of those who speak about *ability* we should require a precise definition of the term, and say to them, what do you mean by it?

Within the last twenty or thirty years, much has been said and written in this country on the subject of human ability. To rid the doctrine of grace from the imputation of *fatalism*, and the consequent denial of the freedom of the human will, which it has been supposed would otherwise fix an indelible stigma upon the Divine character and the distinguishing truths of the Gospel; as well as to fasten a conviction of personal responsibility and guilt more effectually upon the mind and conscience of the sinner, a certain class of theological

writers have drawn a distinction, on which they have laid peculiar stress, between what is called natural and moral inability; affirming that the latter is an appendage, or circumstance of the sinner's condition, but that the former is not. The intention may have been very good, but the service proffered, we think, has been entirely supererogatory. The relief it proposes to the Divine character is certainly unsolicited, and like other acts of *will-worship*, has a show of wisdom, but is not in any honor to the sanctifying of the flesh. It wholly fails in the object to which it professes to aspire. Some of the most approved American writers on theology, however, have of late considered the distinction alluded to as of little or no consequence, and as having led to forms of expression, and modes of exhibiting gospel truth, which are highly objectionable and hurtful. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ*. Hence *new-measures*, Pelagianism, and the wildfire of fanaticism, which have so deeply grieved the hearts of the true mourners in Zion, and spread their desolating influences over such large portions of our land. Among the authors just referred to are Professors Porter and Woods of Andover, especially the latter, whose writings I feel constrained in passing to remark, are an invaluable treasure, with which every student in theology should be acquainted, in this age of adventurous and visionary speculation. No one of discrimination and candor can read the writings of Professor Woods without feeling that he is in communion with a vigorous intellect, that has been chastened and clarified by an humble and implicit deference to the oracles of revealed truth. By this encomium it is not meant that in his productions there is nothing which may authorise a dissent.

To the distinction that has been made between natural and moral inability, and of which we disapprove, we still farther object, because it seems to proceed upon the gratuitous assumption that "the human soul consists of two natures, or of separate, distinct compartments, instead of being a simple, uncompounded, undivided essence, the character of which must be either decidedly good or decidedly bad. It is conceded that in the unrenewed man there are opposite and conflicting exercises, as of the understanding and conscience; but no one, it is presumed, will consider this conflict as an evidence of two distinct natures, one of which is deserving of blame and punishment, and the other of approbation and reward, or which can destroy in the subject the simple unity of the moral character. There can be nothing meritorious in either the *accusings* or *excusings* of natural conscience.

The same or similar observations apply to the "warrings of the flesh against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," as described by the Apostle, and which have generally been supposed to characterize the experience of christians, adverse strugglings of the *new* and *old man*. Now to make out that one part of man's nature is endued with an ability which is counteracted by an inability in another part of his nature, is to gain no advantage. For what is the use of a natural ability that has on the back of it a moral inability, which presses down the subject of it to such an extent, that he can in "no wise lift up himself," or put forth his energies to extricate himself from the burden under which he is laboring, any more than an insect can relieve himself from the incumbent weight of a mountain! Such an ability in effect is no ability; and for the purpose contemplated, the inability of the sinner might as well be allowed to be both natural and moral, as to be only the latter. And yet what is styled *moral* inability is admitted by the disputants on both sides to be thus absolutely entire and invincible. Nothing but Omnipotent power can overcome it.

We press our objections still further, and ask, if indeed the sinner has in himself *any* ability to perform the duties required of him, where does it reside; in what nook or corner of his soul can you find it? The understanding saith, *it is not in me*; for that is *darkened, alienated, blinded*. And if the memory, conscience, judgment, will and affections, (as we are accustomed to divide the spiritual nature of man,) be severally interrogated and scrutinized, they will unanimously return the same verdict; for "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. The loathsome distemper has seized on "the inner man," and spread its deadly infection over the entire frame of his spiritual nature, perverting, benumbing, and stupefying it in regard to all those moral sensibilities and exercises of which the Divine Law takes any cognizance.

Let it be here understood, however, that we have no objections to saying, that fallen men have a natural *capacity*, or *capability* which renders them fit subjects for undergoing that transformation of character, or change of dispositions, by which they can and do become qualified for the performance of the duties enjoined on them. This *capability* they unquestionably have, by which they are distinguished from the irrational tribes of animals, and inanimate matter. But this capability for the exercises in question, is a very different thing from the ability or

power itself to perform them; as different as adaptedness in marble to be converted into a pillar, is different from the ability and skill of the sculptor that are requisite in the execution.

Again: If unrenewed men have not the least particle of moral goodness or ability, and if the ability about which we are enquiring has in it no goodness or holiness, it does not touch the difficulty in question, and it is not worth contending for; if unrenewed men have the least particle of moral goodness or ability within them, by which they are rendered competent to perform the duties required of them, where, we ask, are the passages of Scripture which teach it; which teach it either by express declaration, or fair implication? The advocates of ability have never yet succeeded to our satisfaction in an attempt to adduce them: And we shall bow to no theories, however specious and plausible, which do not come to us authoritatively, backed by an unequivocal—*Thus saith the Lord.*

It is true, that the advocates of ability tell us that unrenewed men are commanded to make to themselves new hearts, to repent, believe, and love God; and that the promulgation of the command implies the ability to obey: else the Divine Being would be chargeable with unreasonable rigor, and with inconsistency in demanding an impossibility. The premises we admit. The conclusion we deny. The mistake lies in this—in supposing that obligation and ability must necessarily, and in all cases and circumstances, be commensurate: whereas, the reverse is oftentimes true.

The case may be illustrated thus:—Israel is bound to love and serve God in all circumstances. No matter how he becomes so. This is the innate and settled conviction of his soul. This obligation, if I may so speak, is a matter of internal sensation and feeling. But Israel, by his own wilful and wicked act has disabled or destroyed himself. He has fettered his own feet, and cut off his own hands, so that in his present impotent condition, it is impossible for him to do the things that are required of him. The question is, has God lost his right to Israel's obedience and services? We trow not. Israel is certainly blameable. Maimed and helpless as he is, the obligations of God are still upon him, and he may justly be punished for not complying with the Divine requisitions; precisely as the unjust steward, who has squandered his Lord's money, may be rightfully called to give an account of his stewardship, and be held responsible for the

goods with which he was originally entrusted, just as much as if he had now the whole investment in his immediate possession.

Take for another illustration, the case of an inebriate, who, in a fit of intoxication, commits the crime of murder. At the moment in which he perpetrates the bloody deed, he is as effectually bereft of his reason as a maniac, and for the time being is neither a free agent, nor an accountable creature, in the full and proper sense of those expressions; nor according to the real principles which those whom we oppose must, in consistency, compel them to maintain. But will the civil law, and the common sense of mankind, pronounce his acquittal, or allow that his intoxication furnishes the smallest mitigation of his offence? Certainly not a sufficient extenuation of it. The inexorable sentence of death must and will pass upon him, in every community where just and salutary laws exist and are enforced. Possibly some may be ready to say to me, beware of Fatalism! The caution is a salutary one, and ought not to be slighted. I mean to take care of that thing: and you shall see in the sequel, the course which we take to keep clear of *that Rock*. We hope, by the aid of the Apostle, or rather by the guidance of inspired truth, to be able to shun it without yielding a single inch of the ground assumed on the doctrine of justification.

Should any choose to carry back their objections to the views that have been advanced, and insist on connecting them with the difficulties that arise out of the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, and inquire of us how man's responsibility can be reconciled with such an arrangement; to them we reply, that at present we have nothing to do with that subject. In it are deep things, which we at all times confess our inability to fathom, and be the disposition of it what it may, it will not materially alter or affect the point now at issue. The question for determination before us just now is, can God rightfully hold an intelligent being responsible, whose condition is that of impotency, under any circumstances?

To confirm still farther the ground that has been assumed, it may here not be improperly asked, that if, to justify the infliction of punishment on transgressors, obligation and ability must be commensurate, then why must this not be a circumstance in man's condition in every possible state; in the future world as well as in this; and indeed in the condition of the angels, who kept not their first estate, as well as in that of the apostate race of man? What can impose a necessity

of the nature described at one time and among one order of beings, which can be dispensed with or removed at another time and among a different order of beings? It is presumeable that none will be so extravagant as to affirm, that "the spirits in prison" have power to repent. And yet it would seem to be a legitimate consequence of the principles opposed, when pushed to their final results, that it is essential to the honor of the Divine character, that intelligent beings be so circumstanced by a fixed ordination from heaven, that it shall be impossible for them to go so far away backward from God, that they cannot return; and even that the fallen angels must retain the ability to restore themselves to his favor by repentance, if they shall only see fit to exercise it.

But to proceed with our investigations concerning the instructions of Divine inspiration: So far in fact, do we find that the Scriptures are from teaching that unrenewed men have ability to perform the duties which they enjoin, that they teach directly the contrary, in the most unequivocal and positive manner. The following specimens will serve as proofs of our position.

"For when we were without strength, (*strength means ability*) when we were without strength, *any* strength, (wholly devoid of it) in due time Christ died for the ungodly." The undeniable meaning of this passage is, that when sinners were "without any ability whatever" to repent, and believe, and love God, in due time Christ died for them; that is, to accomplish that for them, which should bring about their restoration to the Divine favor, and which they could not effect for themselves.

"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.—For without me ye can do nothing." It is not said, that *without me ye can do but little*, but *without me ye can do nothing*. If any thing is left of nothing, what is it? Gather it up, for that is the *ability* of the sinner "to repent, and believe, and love God."

"So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." *Flesh*, in this place, means the unrenewed nature of man. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Like produces like. The flesh is wholly sinful. "In it there dwelleth no good thing." All its products are "evil, only evil, and that continually." "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." They have no ability to please God. Faith pleases him; but faith comes not forth of the flesh. "By grace," says the text,

“are ye saved, through faith, and *that* not of yourselves.” Faith is the *instrument* by which we apprehend the righteousness of Christ. But there is nothing *meritorious* in it as an exercise of the soul. It is not the *procuring* cause of our justification. It is not indeed, an act originating in the sinner’s own mind. “It is the gift of God.” It is His production, and to Him belongs the praise.

“Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” (“The deeds of the law” mean the endeavors of sinners to obey God.) “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely (or wholly,) by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.—Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law:”—without any thing that he has done, or has ability to do.

“Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise, grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.” It is altogether the one thing or the other. The doctrines of grace and works are subversive of each other. The one completely shuts out the other. They cannot co-exist.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” “The carnal mind” comprehends the whole of man’s moral nature. But it has gone away backward from God to such an extent, that it has in itself no power of self-restoration or self-renovation.

“But as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

“So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

The whole of these passages taken together, as well as many others that might be mentioned, obviously present the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, *naked* and stripped of every thing extraneous. Even the instrumentality of *faith* (and the same may be said of repentance, and of every other Christian grace) adds nothing to it, and makes no part of the *meritorious* ground of a sinner’s accep-

tance. They also deny to the human soul, whether considered in its simple and uncompounded character, or divided into separate faculties and parts, any indwelling principle or power by which it can start itself into spiritual life, or turn from "darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Those that "become the sons of God by believing on his name, have the power given unto them; (Jesus Christ is *exalted* expressly to give repentance and forgiveness of sins;) and they are said to be "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man. The ability of the *will* is here cautiously excluded as plainly as language can do it: as it is also when it is elsewhere said of believers, that "it is God who worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

The will of man, you say, is *free*. In a sense, we admit that it is. In a sense too, we affirm that it is *enslaved*; and the Scriptures, we think, warrant the declaration. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (the slave) of sin." "God be thanked that ye were the servants (the slaves) of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you." The well known and striking peculiarity in the condition of the *servant* or *slave* is, that he is subjected to the will of another. Thus specially subjected are unrenewed men, who are in the *bondage* of the Destroyer, and *taken captive by him at his will*. A Divine energy, therefore, is needed to the rectification of the *will*, no less than to the renovation of the affections. In truth, the entire machinery of "the inner man" is deranged; and human nature in the aggregate, as it comes up for inspection in the view of the Allseeing and Holy God, is one vast lump of unadulterated, unmingled wickedness.

I say not, indeed, that the human nature is as *bad* as the *diabolical*; but I do say, that it is no better. Both are utterly devoid of holiness, and as to their moral qualities, are positively and totally depraved: And, therefore, it is unphilosophical, as well as unscriptural, to affirm, that in human nature, (in which there is no moral goodness or holiness,) there is ability to do any thing that is good or holy. It is an obvious contradiction. Can nothing give birth to something, "Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? either a vine figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and com-

eth down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." A consequence of the whole is, that of His "OWN WILL begat He us with the word of truth."

We are aware that it is sometimes objected to representations that are given of human depravity and human impotency, by those reproachfully styled orthodox, that they are too strong. If we say, for example, that "unrenewed men can no more convert themselves than they can create a world, or raise the dead;" we are accused of dealing in *hyperboles*, and of using language that is extremely disheartening and offensive to sinners. No doubt it is so. The probing of gangrenes is no pleasant operation to the patient. We say then, "that a sinner can no more convert himself than he can create a world, or raise the dead. Put along side of these excepted declarations, those of the Holy Ghost which bear on the same topic, and see which are the strongest. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Was not the causing of this light "to shine in the heart" (which refers to the process of conversion) as great a work as the world's original creation; and who could cause it to shine to the smallest extent, but He who said, "Let there be light; and there was light?"

"And you hath he quickened, who were *dead* in trespasses and sins.—Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the *dead*, and Christ shall give thee light.—Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" Has the *clay* in the hands of the *potter* any ability to fashion itself into a vessel? and does it put forth any inherent power in the process of its transformation? And yet this is the similitude, (disheartening and humiliating as it may be) which the Holy Ghost has seen fit to employ in the selection of an emblem to represent depraved human nature in the ag-

gregate, or "lump," as it is taken up to be moulded and fashioned by the plastic hand of Omnipotent Power.

To the views that have now been presented in this discussion on the doctrine of Jusfication, I am not unapprised, that the objections which are made, are numerous, and pressed with no inconsiderable vehemence or confidence. I cannot notice them all. They may be resolved, however, principally into two; and these two are nearly related.

1. Thou wilt say to me then, what is the use of preaching the Gospel, if man is thus disabled? This is *one* objection.

What is the use of preaching the gospel? I answer, much every way: chiefly, because God has commanded it. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." This is our warrant. But would you preach the gospel to *stocks* and *stones*, if God were to command you? Yes. And why? Because no *staggering* at the command of God is to be tolerated. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft; and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry:" And because we know too, from an authority which it would be impious to question, that "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." By reverting to the history of the ancient prophets, we find that Ezekiel was sent on an embassy which, to carnal apprehension, had but very little of promise or encouragement in it:—to prophesy to the *dry bones* of the *valley of vision*, and to say to them—*Live*. He was, however, sped in his embassy; and the issue was, a most wonderful *shaking*; such as has sometimes happened in the ranks of sinners "dead in trespasses and sins," through the foolishness of preaching, by which "it pleases God to save them that believe," when he breathes upon them by his quickening Spirit. This is our encouragement for preaching. We have no other for it than that which arises from a well known and settled ordination of heaven, which engages to render the doctrine of "Christ crucified, the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation." Aside from this truth, so exalting to the Creator, and so humbling to the creature, we would as soon preach to dry bones, or to stones, as to sinners "dead in trespasses and sins." Yes, we go farther, and affirm that it requires a greater stretch of power to convert sinners of Adam's race, than to turn dry bones or stones into

saints. And for this simple and obvious reason; that in the former case there is an *annihilation* of an evil principle of infinite magnitude to be effected, which must supersede, and to which is to be super-added the work of the *new creation*. Hence it is said that Christ came to "destroy the works of the Devil." The *carnal mind* must be *slain*. The *old man* must be destroyed, before the *new man* starts into life. In addition to what is *done*, in the act of building up, a work of infinite magnitude is to be *undone* in the act of demolishing. In conformity with this representation, the conversion of sinners is the most difficult, and through eternity it will doubtless be regarded by all intelligent beings as the most sublime and glorious work that God has ever undertaken to do. When I say, *the most difficult*, I merely speak *after the manner of men*, and do not wish to insinuate it as our creed, that, properly speaking, any thing is *hard* or difficult for Omnipotence to accomplish.

2. The second objection which is made to the views of our doctrine that have been proposed, and which we shall notice, is, that it leads to *fatalism*, destroys human *liberty*, and makes man a *mere machine*. Fatalism is a word of frightful import; and has often been successfully employed to terrify men, and prevent them from becoming Calvinists and Presbyterians. This, in substance, was the taunting resort of cavillers as long ago back as the time of Ezekiel, on whose instructions the unbelievers of that day attempted to fasten a stigma by taking up the proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? If the difficulties under which we labor are the result of a fixed Divine purpose, as we are told, then where is the blame or the help in our condition?"

Now in reply to all this, we aver our belief in the *freedom of the human will* in a *sense*, and to a *certain extent*. But we are opposed to permitting the sinner to make a *god* of the will, "intruding into that which he hath not seen, and vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind." We are opposed to allowing him the indulgence of his blustering notions of pride and self-sufficiency. We believe in the freedom of the will just as far (and no farther) as may be necessary to lay the ground of man's entire *responsibility*, to throw the guilt and blame of his depravity and misconduct *wholly at his own door*, and to vindicate the Divine character from all suspicions of injustice

in inflicting his wrath upon the disobedient. We believe, moreover, that this amount of freedom in the will, is a matter of human sensation and consciousness, which it is therefore in vain to dispute or deny; that it is included *in*, and forms a part *of* the Divine decree itself, (a position which cannot be disproved;) and consequently that the Divine determination secures the liberty of the creature in perfect consistency and harmony with all the fixed and unchangeable purposes of God concerning him. The opposite of this, we say, cannot be shown.

But do any approach us with captious interrogatories, requiring us to explain, and asking us *how* these things can be reconciled? to such we reply, that we are not bound to answer in these matters. As to the *quo modo*, or *manner* in which these things happen, we cannot explain; and if we could, the caviller could not comprehend the explanation. Am I asked, for example, how man at first could be permitted to fall into a state of sin and misery, and how the descendants of the first pair could become involved in the guilt and consequences of their transgressions, and all this be the result of a previous Divine fore-ordination, without in the least implicating the wisdom or goodness of the Almighty; we reply that these are points that surpass human comprehension, and that are to be credited purely on the authority of Divine Revelation. In like manner, am I called upon to reconcile the fixed, unchangeable, and eternal purposes of Jehovah in relation to the apostacy of mankind, with a like efficacious, distinguishing, immutable, and everlasting sovereignty which is displayed in "the election of grace," and in the deliverance of "the purchased possession;" I rejoin that neither is *this* a concern of mine. The Great Jehovah Himself has not attempted to explain it; and why should I? We turn over the cavilling objector to Him, as the Apostle before us has done. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Whence is thine origin, and what are the qualifications for arraigning, and sitting in judgment on, the plans and proceedings of the Eternal? Arrogant insect of yesterday; hide thy diminished head, and conceal thy littleness and vileness within the shell of thine own insignificance. "Is there unrighteousness with God?" "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?" Dress thyself up, and in thy fancied loftiness, assert it, if thou dare. Know that thy proper place is in the dust; that thou

art of ephemeral formation, and knowest nothing; that where thou dost not *understand*, it is thy province to *adore* the dispensations of Him, who is *wonderful in council* and *excellent in working*, and to exercise unlimited and unshaken confidence in the rectitude of God thy Maker?

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” No doubt He will be justified when He speaketh, and be clear when He judgeth. And in that day of the revelation of His righteous judgments, when every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world shall be brought in guilty before Him, He will *see to it* that the whole universe of intelligent minds shall have ample reason to adore and admire Him as the immaculate, the infinitely perfect, and the ever-blessed God.

We cling, then, at all hazards, to the doctrine of the efficacious, discriminating, unchanging sovereignty of Divine grace, in its broadest extent, as we would to our hope of heaven through its mighty operation, and let what will become of *liberty* and *free agency*. And should we be driven by this position to the alternative, or should the necessity arise, (which we do not admit,) of giving up the one or the other; we would promptly surrender the latter. *If* fallen men *have* entirely lost their *liberty of will*, and God should still reclaim them from this condition of abject servitude and loathsome degradation, and elevate them to the enjoyment of heavenly blessedness, who will venture to say, that in the execution of such a design the Almighty would not still be glorified, and the sinner’s salvation furnish matter for rejoicing and praise? Was the *will* of the sinner, or his *liberty* consulted, when God at first breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul? Was he active in his creation? Certainly not. And why then, when in a condition of ruin, which, without the intervention of mercy is worse than non-entity, and has, if possible, fewer claims to distinction, might not God, if He chose, in like manner *restore*, as He originally *imparted*, spiritual life, without the concurrence of his will? Might not God, in this event, be glorified, and the sinner still be joyful and happy? Yes, doubtless. The thing is within the domains of possibility. But it would detract from *the dignity of his nature*. In other language, it would “bring down every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,” and utterly exclude the idea of merit, and the privilege of *boasting*; the very consummation, by the bye, which constitutes the chief design of the Gospel, and which God has his heart

intently fixed on effecting. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

The condition of apostate men in the present world, my brethren, is exceedingly degraded and helpless: and many persons are frequently and erroneously heard to speak of it as a *probationary state*: which, in the right and strict use of terms, it is not. The period of man's probation, rightly and properly so called, was in the Paradisaical state, and closed with the immediate result of that disastrous experiment. His condition since is one of *reprieve*, not of *probation*. The clemency of the righteous and offended Lawgiver has granted a *respite* to the criminals, which is the season in which He manifests "the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The inspired representation is, that men are *condemned already*. They commence their very existence with the curse of God clinging to them. "For by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.—For the judgment was by one to condemnation." This life is the season in which insulted Heaven *waits to be gracious*; the season in which its provisions are displayed, and of which the "prisoners of hope" are invited to avail themselves; to *come to repentance*; to improve *the accepted time*; to "come to Christ that they may have life;" and *not* to see whether they will do any thing to recommend them to the Divine favor. It is too late now for that; for "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all," and that all might be *shut up to the faith of the Gospel*. The gospel, therefore, in our conceptions of it, is strictly and entirely remedial in its character and overtures. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." This burden of *wrath* was on him, before the Gospel came to him with its offers; and if he rejects them, there is only a continuance of the wrath to which he was previously subjected. It simply *abideth on him*.

Now between Fatalism and the views that have been expressed throughout this discussion, there is in our apprehension a palpable and immeasurable disparity. Fatalism exhibits the universe as a dark and doleful cell, in which Chaos and Confusion reign; all irrel-

jigent beings bound hand and foot by a law of irreversible and unrelenting *necessity*, by which the imaginary "Supreme" Himself is fettered; all moral sensibilities and social affections congealed; the actions of intelligent creatures unobserved, and unrecompensed; good and evil, virtue and vice undistinguished; annihilation the end of human existence; and all events that occur as happening according to capricious *Contingency*, or blind *Chance*.

The difference between this scheme and that of the Gospel, which we preach, is, that the latter exhibits a Self-existent, pervading, presiding, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Incomprehensible, Immutable, Everlasting, Ever-blessed, and Infinitely holy and merciful God; who, in the sovereign exercise of his unlimited wisdom and goodness, hath "fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass," and who, while he is unchangeable in His purposes, and "doeth all things according to "the counsel of His own will," acts not arbitrarily, nor despotically, nor by compulsion; but for reasons the most valid, though often to us inscrutable, and altogether freely; and all whose decrees and works will forever redound to the praise and glory of his great name. Fatalism in short, leaves the world *without God*, while the views of the Gospel which we exhibit, recognise a pervading Divinity, bind men to obedience by sanctions the most solemn and affecting, and hold them up as the guilty, and, *in themselves*, helpless, hopeless transgressors of God's righteous Law.

Whether a different representation from that which we have given, would be more likely to fasten on the mind and conscience of the sinner a *conviction of his guilt*, is not for us to inquire. The simple question for determination is, *is this, or is it not, the truth of God?* And though to others, the views that have been presented may appear to be paralyzing, to us it seems that no others are so suited to place the sinner in that humble attitude of out-cast, forlorn, and guilty wretchedness, in which God alone can meet him with His favor, or which, when truly *known* and cordially *believed*, will be likely to kindle within his bosom a flame of more burning intensity, to arouse his drowsy faculties and prepare him for the baptism of *the Holy Ghost and of fire*.

"Out of the depths," said the psalmist, "have I cried unto thee." And again; "I was brought low, and he helped me." All sinners in like manner must be brought *low*, and feel that they are completely *lost*, before the Most High will condescend to interpose for their res-

cue. They are "sinking in deep mire where there is no standing," are absolutely at the feet of mercy and at the Divine disposal; and He who hath "all power in heaven and on earth committed to Him," only can save them. Glorious indeed, my brethren, is this Redeemer, who hath "drank the wine of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God, and trod the wine-press alone." *Exceeding* indeed are the riches of His grace and the greatness of His power, who saves *ungodly men* from hell and sin. The riches of His grace indeed, *exceed*, and go far beyond the *belief* of Arminians, and Pelagians, and Socinians; and *exceed* even the comprehension and conceptions of the greatest saints. Thanks be to His name, that infinite pity hath touched His heart, and that "He hears the ravens when they cry." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Truly "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

To Him then, with humble confidence and joyful hope, let humbled, helpless sinners cry:—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—"O Lord, bring my soul out of prison."—"Lord, save, or I perish."—"God, be merciful to me a sinner."—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

"All hail the power of Jesus' name:"

"Let angels prostrate fall;"

"Bring forth the Royal Diadem,"

"And crown Him LORD OF ALL."

